

newsletter

Friern Barnet & Whetstone Residents' Association



in this issue -

1. *Barnet House appeal allowed*
2. *Barnet Council Working From Home Policy*
3. *Jubilee Roundup*
4. *Jubilee Roundup.*
5. *Pinkham Way outcome*
6. *FBWRA donation to support Ukrainian refugees in Barnet*

BARNET HOUSE? IT'S A "YES" FROM HIM

In July the independent, Government appointed, Planning Inspector conducting the planning appeal into the proposals to develop Barnet House in Whetstone by extending and converting the old office building into 260 apartments and 709 square metres of commercial floor space gave his decision "YES!" – or, as he more soberly wrote- "the appeal should be allowed".

Out with the old.....



Barnet Council had refused the planning application, on the basis that (broadly) the scheme would be too big, in terms of height and bulk and too dense, resulting in overdevelopment, which would be detrimental to the character of the area and didn't adequately deal with requirements for social housing

and other "planning gain" but would result in an undue strain being placed upon local health services, and therefore didn't comply with various local, London and national planning policies. The Inspector disagreed with the Council. The increase in height of the main building would be about 2m. A concrete frame on the roof would be removed and replaced with 2 set-back floors of flats. This would not have an adverse impact on the character of the area, and although widening the main building would have an adverse impact in some specific locations, the design of the remodelled exterior – balconies and the

use of brick- would help to assimilate the scheme into the character of the High Road, as it would be more in keeping with other nearby residential blocks. To the rear of the main building, the scheme includes a new building fronting Baxendale Gardens and effectively 7 storeys high. The Inspector decided that, although this would have specific very local adverse impact from some aspects, overall it would not be harmful to the character and appearance of the area, and in particular, there would be no harm to residential amenity with regard to outlook (it had been agreed between the parties that there would be no harm to living conditions of residents of the Baxendale Care Home).

..... and in with the new

Overall, the Inspector concluded, the increased size of the scheme would not be harmful to the character and appearance of the area and so would not constitute overdevelopment, and limited and specific points where there was adverse impact did not prevent the scheme from complying overall with the relevant policies. This dealt with the "main issue" in the appeal. The Inspector noted the scheme would bring benefits, such as 260 new homes, of which 32 would be "affordable" (the parties had agreed after a "viability assessment" that this was the most affordable units the site could take), and the affordable units were a benefit to which he attached "significant weight", and potentially a local community health service unit on the ground floor (although, from the publicly available Council papers that we have seen, there is no guarantee that this health service unit will ever materialise).

Very limited parking provision on site was an issue- mentioned by many of the 550 local residents who objected to the application (and FBWRA), but the Inspector decided the plans complied with the relevant planning policies (which are designed to limit car ownership) and noted there would be a legal agreement between developer and Council for a contribution to a

..... continued from page 1

Controlled Parking Zone ("CPZ"), which would work to prevent unauthorised parking.

The legal agreement should also cover the issues that were included in the Council's second, "planning gain" reason for refusal.

Whilst the Inspector's decision will be a disappointment to many, it should be recognised that the basic principle of our planning system is that if a proposal complies with the relevant planning rules then ordinarily it should be approved. Here an experienced Inspector decided that

the proposal did comply. Further, assuming the developer is happy with the outcome, and doesn't decide to try to "improve" on the approval it now has, then at least the "eyesore" that currently stands in the High Road will be replaced by something better looking (even if we would prefer that it was somewhere else). A link to a copy of the Inspector's decision can be found on the FBWRA website at www.gwra.org, on the "Barnet House N20 -Planning Appeal Decision" page.

DT

BARNET COUNCIL TO STAFF - "WE DON'T WANT YOU IN THE OFFICE."

We made a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to the Council on the subject of "working from home" (WFH) by the Council's office-based staff and contractors



because we wanted to find out the impact this was having on the provision of Council services.

The responses were quite

surprising – the Council doesn't record any statistics on WFH or have any formal reports or policies on the subject – so it must follow that it doesn't have any monitoring the impact of WFH on service provision. This is despite there being a "Flexible Working Policy", prepared earlier this year (surely this is a "formal policy"?), and a "Future of Work Guiding Principles" document, prepared in June 2021. We were provided with copies. The key point that emerges from the documents is that "The Council embraces flexible working as the default option for service delivery. Flexible working practices should be the norm and not the exception." Thus staff "should generally only attend the office for one or more [specified] reasons", such as attending meetings, for collaborative work or training, or if domestic circumstances prevent working away from the office (but "this should not assume full-time attendance at the office unless circumstances are exceptional"). So, there is a very clear push from the Council to staff – we would prefer you not to work from the office. That may well suit many staff, and why not, if service standards are maintained? The Council may save on premises costs and staff on the time and cost of commuting. And of course, some roles are just not appropriate for flexible working, because the work must be done at a fixed location (e.g. receptionist) or "on the move" (e.g. street cleaners), and Barnet recognises this. However, the key issue is whether service standards are

maintained. It isn't necessarily the case that working from home is at least as efficient as working from an office, and we recently read a report of a survey, commissioned by Samsung and carried out by the marketing company OnePoll, of 2,000 British workers aged 18 – 41 which found that just under 40% of them said they felt less productive now than when they first started working from home. Then of course, there are the well known problems at DVLA, the Passport Office and HMRC, etc. It is troubling that the Council appears not to be monitoring the impact of WFH on the provision of Council services, or whether WFH provides value for money (our money, by the way, as taxpayers) yet this appears to be the case, as no statistics are recorded as to the extent of the practice and its impact seems not to have been considered by Council management – we asked for copies of any documents reporting on or considering the issue dated after 01 September last year, and have been told the Council doesn't hold any. Surely, if it had been considered there would be documents about the issue? This is a really important issue for service delivery, whether the services are provided by Council staff or by contractors, so it is disappointing that senior Council management seems not to be paying any attention to it. Although this is a management issue, and it is management who are immediately responsible, not Councillors, Councillors are nevertheless also responsible as they should be instructing senior management and providing oversight. The new Council administration has only been in office since May, but we hope that they will rapidly get a grip and issue instructions so that service standards can be effectively monitored and, as necessary, changes made.

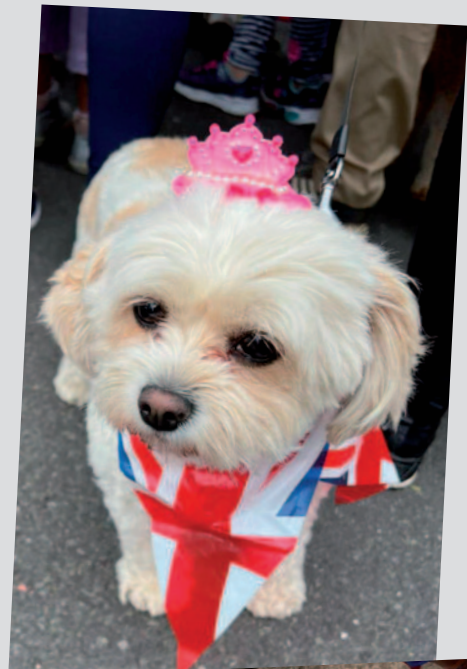
Barnet Council asked that if we intended to reuse information supplied to us under the FOI request, we should make sure we made it clear that the wording from the two documents we have quoted above is © London Borough of Barnet. We are, of course, happy to oblige!

DT

JUBILEE ROUNDUP



The first two weeks in June saw the greatest number of Jubilee street parties in this area than in the rest of the Borough combined. Although the whole of London celebrated, reputedly Barnet had the second most after Redbridge. Feedback received was overwhelmingly positive; these parties and events were all very welcome and inclusive and brought many people together. During the pandemic we started speaking to more of our neighbours, albeit at a distance; thus organising a street party took this neighbourliness a step further. Apart from lunches and teas catered by residents, we managed to incorporate choirs, bands and orchestras both modern and classical and dog shows into the entertainment. Sadly, we did not receive as many photos of these local events as we had hoped, therefore the FBWRA Jubilee photo prize has not been awarded this time. One thing is clear, our community clearly knows how to party.....



AT THE FAIR IN FRIARY PARK- JUBILEE WEEKEND



The grapevine also indicates that many communities took the opportunity to celebrate the Jubilee by installing benches, plaques and planters on their local High Streets to commemorate this amazing anniversary. The photo left shows the installation on the High Road organised by Love Whetstone in collaboration with Barnet Council.

MJ



THERMOPYLAE



HELMS DEEP



AGINCOURT



TRAFALGAR

Just the showmens' sense of fun, or are they trying to tell us something?

WHAT IS HAPPENING ON PINKHAM WAY???

14 years ago, I had never heard of Pinkham Way or the North London Waste Authority (NLWA).

Why would I have done? In common with most people, I mainly become interested with anything if it looked as if it might positively or adversely affect the local community e.g. new school building, pavement repair, library closures, proposed building of huge tower blocks, deep and nasty looking potholes, a reduction in waste bin collections or the removal of a local bus route.

A few words of introduction are perhaps needed. The NLWA exists to deal with the transportation and safe disposal of waste for the London boroughs of Barnet, Haringey, Hackney, Enfield, Camden, Islington and Waltham Forest. Apparently, 570,000 tonnes of waste are produced by these boroughs each year. A truly, staggering and frightening figure. The NLWA are required to put forward waste plans for the future, in fact, 15 years in the future. With this in mind, the minions of the organisation cast their eyes upon a site located in Haringey but owned by Barnet, the eponymous Pinkham Way site. It is placed on the Muswell Hill side of the A406, just behind the bridge from the Retail Park giving access to the Western lanes of the North Circular Road. If you have ever noticed it, you would have thought it was scrubland, overgrown and used by locals for the disposal of excess rubbish.

The NLWA investigated, decided and purchased the site in early 2009 for the staggering sum of £12,084,200. Public money spent on a site with NO planning permission for anything!!!! You may think that was a scandalous waste of our money.

Soon a PLAN was published, the North London Waste Plan (NLWP). It described future waste management delivery. It was horrendous. It included

building the largest macro bio-digester in Europe on the Pinkham Way site.

Many of us living in the N10 and N11 area (and beyond), decided that we had no wish to live near to such a monstrosity. This feeling was not mere NIMBYISM but beliefs founded on research and experiences from other sites.

In a short time, locals decided that the building of this proposed site would mean a whole variety of adverse happenings in their area. For example:

- Vastly increased traffic as the bin lorries from 7 boroughs travelled to and fro each day.
- Tailbacks on the A406 in both directions as lorries queued to cross the bridge by the retail park which would be the only access to the site.
- Increased pollution at an already proven extremely polluted site.
- Noxious gases (talk to anyone who has ever lived near to a site anything like the proposed one).
- Increase in breathing difficulties for many, leading to deaths for the very young and the very old.
- Toxic effects to be felt particularly by children attending 6/7 primary schools and 4/5 secondary schools plus many nursery schools and day care facilities.
- Brain fog generally from toxic fumes.
- Bio-diversity of the site would be lost.
- Great value lost from properties located near to the site.

Oh, you think of it, the planned digester was to be the source of all that would be bad in N11, N10, N13 and parts of N2.



..... continued from page 5



Protest groups formed. The most effective (in my view) being the Pinkham Way Alliance (PWA). I joined and supported it any way I could. A good deal of money was raised in order to be able to seek professional opinion and pay for excellent counsel. I was a local councillor at that time and courted trouble for myself as my view

disagreed with that of the then council. Did that bother me??? Not one iota.

There are MANY documents on record that you can read to follow the tortuous paths followed by the NWLA and the PWA as they each attempted to progress their opposing positions. I have truly enjoyed researching these as I sat down to write this article.

Finally, I came to the conclusion that you, the reader, probably only wish to know the outcome.

The outcome couldn't be better, unless you were or are a planner with the NLWA.

The NLWP, effective until 2036, has now been signed off by each of the seven boroughs, and does

NOT include Pinkham Way in any shape or form.

So, local protest, properly organised, CAN make a difference. Well done to the PWA and the other protest groups that formed to take on the might of a government quango and WON.

KS

THE FBWRA DONATION TO SUPPORT UKRAINE REFUGEES IN BARNET

£1,000 to help young Ukrainian refugees settle in locally at school - that is what we agreed at this year's AGM to donate out of our reserves, you'll remember. It could, for example, take the edge off the initial breath-taking cost of being kitted out in most schools' uniform from their stipulated supplier (about £150 at a glance), the Committee suggests.

As this issue goes to press we don't quite yet have the

number or age or school placement of this summer's newest arrivals. Judging by the placement figures when the summer term ended, however, the majority of the intake will probably be girls of secondary school age.

By the time you read this we hope that our funds will have been allocated, and brought some mothers much needed relief.

YR

MEMBERSHIP costs only £5 per household per calendar year. It provides quarterly newsletters, email updates, information on local issues, social events, and a chance to influence what happens in your neighbourhood. Application forms from FBWRA.org or from FBWRA Treasurer, 12 Macdonald Road, N11 3JB

Friern Barnet & Whetstone Residents' Association.

- We are non-political
 - We work for all residents in the area
 - We discuss issues with Local Councillors and Council Officials
 - We are associated with the following bodies:
- The Federation of Residents' Associations in Barnet
 - The Finchley Society
 - Friends of Friary Park
 - The Friern Barnet & District Local History Society
 - The London Green Belt Council
 - Love Whetstone
 - Open Spaces Society